



**InvestAcc**  
PENSION  
ADMINISTRATION LTD

# **GUIDE TO SIPP IN-SPECIE PROPERTY TRANSFERS**







# Guide to transferring Property & Land from another pension scheme to your SIPP

**This guide covers some of the main practical issues that arise in the process of transferring property or land from another pension scheme into your SIPP. It does not cover the merits or pitfalls of investing in property or making these transfers.**

Once you have decided to transfer property you will need to complete our Property & Land Questionnaire, this allows us to consider your proposal, taking into account all fees and taxes.

Remember that there are two sides to this transaction, the current pension scheme trustees (for the transferring scheme) and the new pension scheme trustees (for the receiving scheme). Each will require their own legal representation, similar to a sale and purchase, even though no money will be changing hands. This guide is written from the point of view of the receiving scheme; you will need to liaise with your current pension provider regarding their process, requirements, and any costs for moving away from them.

Although the property is already owned by a pension scheme and therefore deemed acceptable to the transferring trustees, we will still require due diligence to assess whether the property is acceptable to the receiving trustees.

Please bear in mind that we cannot guarantee to accept a transfer of a particular property as there may be unforeseen issues that arise along the way and, in some cases, we may decline a property transfer without giving a reason. For ease of reference, throughout this guide we will use the word 'property' to denote either property or land.

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### **Due diligence**

When transferring property to a Minerva SIPP pension scheme, the member trustees and InvestAcc Pension Trustees Limited will have been appointed joint trustees of the pension scheme and consequently will become the new joint owners of the property. Therefore, we require sufficient due diligence to allow us to assess whether the property is suitable to be held by the SIPP trustees.

At our discretion, we may offer a limited due diligence option for transfers of property between pension schemes. In these cases, we may agree to a more focused set of relevant enquiries from the transferring pension scheme, in some cases we may be able to avoid some searches, depending on which searches have previously been undertaken by the current owners.

The completion of a Property & Land Questionnaire for In-Specie Transfers allows us to consider various aspects of the proposal. We will also require a copy of the most recent surveyor's valuation report, if this was produced more than 3 years ago, we will require a side letter from the surveyor confirming the current value. There may be other circumstances in which we may require a new valuation. We will appoint a solicitor to act on behalf of the receiving SIPP trustees (see later).

The following are examples of aspects that we will consider:

- Is the property commercial and in the UK?
- Is the property freehold, or leasehold with at least 50 years remaining?
- Is the property likely to be deemed a depreciating or wasting asset?
- Can the costs of the transfer be met by sufficient funds already in the SIPP, and if not, how is any shortfall being met?
- Can the property be insured for normal risks?
- Are the terms of any existing or proposed leases acceptable?
- Is there a reasonable deadline for the transaction to complete?
- What is the current VAT status of the property, and who will advise on that?
- Does the ownership structure cause any additional issues, such as multiple third-party owners that also own a share of VAT elected property?
- Are all transactions with connected parties being done on commercial terms?
- Are there any environmental issues?
- Are any conditions attached to the property, for instance a leasehold property with a high level of ground rent?
- Can the pension scheme's interests be protected via a limitation of liability clause?
- Are there plans to develop the property after the transfer? If so, do the proposals meet our requirements?

There are various other aspects that we will consider as part of our enquiries and we may need to raise issues with you along the way.

### **Financial considerations - transferring the property and on-going cashflow**

You will need to work out whether the value of your receiving SIPP is sufficient to conduct the transfer, allowing for its element of expenses plus any applicable fees and taxes. This can include some or all of the following:

- Value Added Tax (VAT)
- InvestAcc SIPP fees
- Adviser fees
- Solicitor fees and disbursements (including fees for searches and Land Registry)
- Bank fees
- Surveyor's valuation report fees
- Insurance costs (normally recharged to the tenant)
- Business rates (where there is no tenant)
- Additional funds to meet the first 3 months loan repayments, if borrowing is involved

Where the underlying beneficiary is the same person, the transfer can usually be done on an 'in-specie' basis, meaning that the property should not have to be bought and sold; in most instances it is unlikely that the transfer will result in Stamp Duty Land Tax (England and Northern Ireland), Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (Scotland) or Land Transfer Tax (Wales), although a solicitor will be asked to confirm the actual position.

You will also need to ensure there will be enough funds to cover one-off and regular outgoings. Operating your SIPP with a small or minimal cash balance can cause difficulty; we recommend a sensible buffer is maintained at all times.

While a regular stream of rent can help increase or maintain the fund value this is not guaranteed as tenants may vacate, fail or you may have to accept a lower rate of rent if the market has fallen, and your SIPP may ultimately have to bear the loss of income.

If there is a shortfall in the value of your SIPP then you will need to consider how to fund any shortfall, and if appropriate you may need to arrange any required borrowing (see later in this guide).

### **Value Added Tax (VAT) may apply on the transfer of certain properties**

You will need to know the VAT status of the property, and whether you would like your receiving SIPP to register for VAT. Properties subject to VAT are sometimes referred to as 'VAT elected' or 'subject to an Option To Tax'. A specialist VAT adviser / accountant would have to advise you on the best course of action, we cannot provide advice.

### **Properties not subject to VAT**

Many of our SIPPs hold property which is not VAT elected; these SIPPs are not VAT registered and therefore do not require quarterly VAT returns. In some circumstances, you may choose to elect the property to VAT, such as when you are spending a significant amount developing the property; your VAT adviser / accountant will help you with that.

### **Properties subject to VAT**

If the current pension scheme is VAT registered and the property/land opted to tax, InvestAcc will create a new VAT registration for the new pension scheme and opt to tax the property, provided the property is owned fully within the pension scheme and there is no third-party owner. You, or your current pension provider, will need to deal with the de-registration of the transferring scheme once the transfer has completed.

For VAT elected properties, it may be possible to treat the transfer as a Transfer of a Going Concern (TOGC) providing that it fits specific criteria. In this case VAT would not be payable on the transfer but it would apply to future rents and on a future sale. You will always need a VAT specialist / accountant to confirm the VAT status; the consequences of getting this wrong can be severe.

If it cannot be treated as a Transfer of Going Concern, then VAT may be chargeable on the transfer of VAT elected property. If the current pension scheme is VAT registered and the property opted to tax, an accountant or VAT specialist will therefore need to confirm whether VAT could be payable on the transfer. In most instances where there is a current lease in place and it is going to continue once the transfer has completed it can be treated as a Transfer of a Going Concern, but this will have to be confirmed by an accountant or VAT specialist.

For VAT elected properties fully owned by our SIPPs we will prepare VAT paperwork and submit quarterly VAT returns. In the case of property with non-SIPP owners we will not be able to offer VAT registration and VAT return services. If VAT applies then we will confirm this to you so that you can arrange to appoint an external VAT specialist / accountant and property manager.

### **Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES)**

Since 2008, property can only be sold or let with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) which assesses the energy efficiency of a property on the scale A to G, where A is the most efficient, and G is the least efficient. An EPC remains valid for 10 years unless the property has been materially altered during that time.

If you are considering the transfer of a property then you should consider how the regulations are likely to affect you, and whether this may impact your ability to let the property in future, and the costs involved in improving the property and/or complying with the legislation. This may have an impact on the marketability and value of properties, particularly for those in bands F or G. We encourage you to discuss this with an Energy Assessor (or a 'section 63 adviser' in Scotland) and to take legal advice.

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### **MEES for property in England and Wales**

From 1st April 2018 it became illegal for a landlord to let a property which falls within either of the two lowest bands, F or G.

The trigger for these regulations is the granting of a new lease or renewing an existing one, on or after 1st April 2018 (the first 'lease event' after this date). Where no lease event occurs after that date, the property must comply by 1st April 2023 at the latest.

Some properties will be exempt from the new requirements; properties that rely on exemptions will need to be added to the exemptions register from 1 April 2018.

You can find further information about the regulations and exemptions on the following page: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-non-domestic-private-rented-property-minimum-standard-landlord-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-non-domestic-private-rented-property-minimum-standard-landlord-guidance)

### **MEES for property in Scotland**

Since 1st September 2016, larger properties in Scotland with total floor area of more than 1,000 square metres, cannot be sold or let until the owner has a valid EPC and undertakes further assessment to produce an 'Action Plan' identifying targets for improvement of the carbon and energy performance of the building and how these targets would be met through physical improvements to the property.

The owner can then either implement that Action Plan within 42 months, or to defer by reporting operational energy ratings (displaying actual measured energy use via a 'Display Energy Certificate' (DEC)) on an annual basis.

All Action Plans and DEC's must be lodged here: [www.scottishepcregister.org.uk](http://www.scottishepcregister.org.uk)

Some properties will be exempt from the need to obtain an EPC and / or the need to comply.

You can find further information about the regulations and exemptions on the following page: [www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Building/Building-standards/S63](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Building/Building-standards/S63)

### **Leases**

Property that is let should be subject to a 'fully repairing and insuring' occupational lease on commercial terms, incorporating our requirements and standard limitation of liability clause. We are happy to consider the continuation of an existing unexpired occupational lease; in some cases, an existing lease may need to be altered which would require the agreement of all parties.

Any new leases with a connected tenant must be on commercial terms, the level of rent matching that recommended by a RICS qualified surveyor. The lease must commence from the date the property is occupied. Rent payments are to be in advance, the frequency of payment may be monthly, quarterly, six monthly or annually. Rent reviews must be upwards only, the period between rent reviews must not exceed five years.

The lease should provide for the landlord to insure the property and for the tenant to reimburse the premiums and any Insurance Premium Tax. The policy should include cover for 36 months loss of rent, which is a standard commercial requirement, to cover scenarios such as the time it takes for a property to be rebuilt following a disaster.

If the lease is of an entire building, the tenant should be responsible for all repairs. If the property is let under two or more leases, the lease should enable the landlord to recover from the tenants the entire cost of the repairs through a service charge.

We do not accept expired leases that are holding over, especially to connected tenants, therefore you will need to decide whether to have the lease renewed before the transfer of the property completes, or have it dealt with at the same time as the transfer by the solicitors.

We will not accept a property where a tenant is in arrears, especially if the tenant is a connected party, therefore please ensure the rent is up to date and there are no arrears prior to completion of the transfer. In some cases, we may be able to accept the property if a rent repayment plan has already been put in place with the current pension provider to pay off any arrears.

The trustees have an obligation to HMRC to monitor that all rent is received when due and the terms of the lease must be enforced, particularly if the tenant is connected.

Unless an independent professional property management company has been appointed as agent to collect rent on the trustees' behalf, all rent must be paid directly into the designated pension scheme bank account.

Where the landlord and tenant are connected and rent is not being paid in accordance with the terms of the lease, this may result in an unauthorised payment, as defined in the Finance Act 2004. If such an unauthorised payment is made by your pension scheme, HMRC will impose a tax charge on the tenant (i.e. you or your business) of between 40% and 55% of the unauthorised payment. In addition, a scheme sanction charge of between 15% and 40% will be imposed on your SIPP. As Scheme Administrator, we are required to report to HMRC any unauthorised payments made.

Should you wish to sell the property in future, where a tenant is a connected party and there are rental arrears under the tenancy agreement, we will only start the sale process if the arrears are settled or the buyer has agreed to purchase the arrears. Where a transfer of the property to another pension provider is requested, we will notify that pension scheme of arrears relating to the property.

### **Choosing a solicitor**

A solicitor will prepare a report on title; obtain environmental and other appropriate searches; make relevant enquiries; prepare transfer documentation and register the change of ownership with the appropriate Land Registry. They may also need to examine existing leases, or draft new ones.

The receiving SIPP's solicitor's costs and disbursements will normally be paid from your new SIPP funds, assuming it has sufficient funds to do so, or you may arrange to pay them directly (and seek reimbursement from your SIPP at a later date, funds permitting) if you wish.

Note that with property transfers between pension schemes, your cash funds will not usually be transferred until after the property transfer completes, which could be weeks or months later; this often means that there may be no cash in the receiving SIPP to pay fees when they are due.

In these cases, you will therefore need to arrange for cash funds to be in your receiving SIPP before completion of the property transfer, either by a partial cash transfer from your previous provider (if allowed), or by making a contribution into your SIPP with us (you should speak to a financial adviser on the possible consequences of this). Alternatively, you may be able to enter into an agreement with the solicitors to pay their costs after the property transfer completes.

Appointing a good Solicitor, with experience of dealing with pension scheme trustees and their requirements, can make the process of acquiring transferring property go much more smoothly. To help streamline this process we have created a panel of carefully selected solicitors. Please refer to our 'Guide to Panel Solicitors' for details of the panel and the specially negotiated terms. You may ask us to appoint a panel solicitor, or you may choose your own provided they are regulated by the Solicitors Regulatory Authority (for properties in England & Wales), the Law Society of Scotland (for properties in Scotland) or the Law Society of Northern Ireland (for properties in Northern Ireland).

Please note that in-specie transfers will require solicitors to act for each side of the transaction.

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### **Choosing a surveyor**

A RICS qualified surveyor will be required to provide a valuation report.

We may accept a copy of the most recent valuation report produced within the last three years. If the most recent report was produced more than three years ago, we would require a side letter from the surveyor confirming the current values. Note that there may be some circumstances in which we will require a full new valuation report, even where one has been completed within the last three years, such as where the property has been materially altered since the last valuation.

If a bank is refinancing your loan due to the transfer between pension schemes, they may require a valuation report from their own panel; we are happy to use a copy surveyor's report which has been produced for the lender.

The report should include:

- A basic assessment of the condition of the property.
- A recommendation as to whether a full structural survey/environmental risk/contamination or asbestos survey is required.
- Colour photographs and OS plan showing the property in addition to street and location maps.
- The open market value of the property.
- A reinstatement figure for insurance purposes.
- A recommended current market rent.
  - For these purposes the surveyor will need to know how long you want the lease to run (it must normally be at least as long as the repayment period of any loan secured on the property) and whether there will be any break clauses (allowing the lease to be terminated before the end of the term but not before the end of the loan period).
  - Note that in cases where the tenant is you or someone connected to you, any new lease must reflect the level of market rent set by the surveyor. Existing leases can normally remain in place on their current terms, until expiry.

Where a new valuation report is being provided, the surveyor's report and invoice must be addressed in the name of your SIPP scheme and membership number and sent to our Carlisle Office. You may arrange for payment yourself, and you can request reimbursement from your SIPP funds later, if you wish (funds permitting).

### **Transferring or refinancing an outstanding loan**

If your current pension scheme has an outstanding loan, it will almost certainly be secured on the property you are transferring. The loan will need to be transferred/refinanced to your new SIPP scheme. Your current lender will need to agree to the transfer/refinancing. A new loan account, and possibly loan servicing account, depending on your chosen lender's requirements, will need to be opened in your receiving SIPP's name.

You will also need to consider the amount that is outstanding, as some lenders will refuse to refinance the outstanding amount if it is below their minimum lending criteria.

You will need to discuss all of this with your current lender before proceeding with the property transfer.

If the property is owned jointly with a non-SIPP third party, and they have outstanding borrowing secured against the property, the non-SIPP third party will need to contact their lender and let them know that the land registry title is to be changed, and their lender will need to agree, and also enter into a division of liability with the new pension scheme to ensure the value of your shares are protected, should the non-SIPP third party default on their loan.

There may also be an option for you to refinance your loan with another lender at this point, if you should wish, but again this is something you would need to discuss with your proposed new lender before proceeding with the property transfer.

We do not operate a panel of lenders so you will be responsible for arranging finance yourself. Although facilities are often negotiated locally, most banks will have a centralised lending unit and a specialist team dealing with loans to pension schemes.

Note that involving a commercial lender is likely to extend the overall timescale required to transfer the property.



### Further specialist enquiries

Occasionally we may need to ask for specialist reports, structural surveys or risk management reports for contamination and environmental issues depending on the comments in the valuation report and all other documents submitted to us. These will not be undertaken without your agreement, but your receiving SIPP fund will be responsible for the cost and for any other fees that may be incurred if the proposed transfer is progressed whilst waiting for the report even if the result means we are unable to proceed with the transfer.

Where we feel that these additional reports are required, or indeed are advised by professionals such as solicitors or surveyors we will not be able to proceed with a transfer without them.

### Property administration

In most cases, InvestAcc will operate as 'property administrator'. We do not act as 'property manager'.

As property administrator we will handle all rental invoicing and collection on behalf of the pension scheme trustees, we will administrate lease events, insurance renewals and payment of invoices. We will also arrange VAT aspects such as registration and returns, if applicable. We do not offer services for debt collection, finding tenants, negotiation of leases or rental terms.

The following table describes the times when appointment of an independent professional property manager will be required:

Pension Scheme Ownership	VAT elected	Other owner is connected	Tenant is connected	Does InvestAcc insist on Appointment of a Property Manager?	
				Up to 3 tenants	4 or more tenants
Full	Any	N/A	Any	Optional	Required
Partial	No	No	Yes	Optional	Required
Partial	No	No	No	Optional*	Required
Partial	No	Yes	No	Required	Required
Partial	Yes	Any	Any	Required	Required

*\*Unless other owner and tenant are different parties, in which case a property manager will be required.*

Please note that InvestAcc does not permit customers or connected parties to act as property managers for pension schemes. If you wish to appoint a property manager, they must be an independent professional company with the relevant experience in managing commercial property.

If we have said that the appointment of a property manager is optional, we reserve the right to change this to make it a mandatory requirement in the future. To allow you time to find a property manager, we would aim to give you 6 months' notice, where possible.

### Joint ventures

We allow your SIPP to transfer a share of a property along with other owners, including 'non-SIPP owners' and third parties.

In these cases, the services we offer will depend on the VAT status of the property:

- If the property is not VAT registered then we will collect the rent for the entire property; we will remit the non-SIPP owner's share of the rent to them, or we can collect the pension schemes share of rent only, if the non-SIPP owner and tenant are in agreement with this. Alternatively, you can appoint an independent property manager to handle this.
- If the property is VAT registered, you must appoint an independent property manager to collect rent and perform VAT registration and VAT returns.

We do not permit customers or connected parties acting as property managers for the pension schemes. If you wish to appoint a property manager, they must be a professional independent company with the relevant experience in managing commercial property.

Note that where the pension scheme only owns a share of the property it may be more difficult for you to arrange for your SIPP to obtain a loan secured against the property.

Please see our 'Joint Venture' factsheet, available on our website for further information.

### **Transfer of residential leaseholds**

If the transfer includes a long leasehold interest in residential property, we will not be able to accept the transfer. In this case, the title would have to be restructured so that the pension scheme only owns a long leasehold in the commercial element. Alternatively, the residential element could be converted to commercial (see Frequently Asked Questions section at the end of this guide).

### **Timescale**

We cannot guarantee any timescale for completion of the transfer as many aspects are simply out of our hands. In our experience and in normal market conditions it typically takes 3-6 months from instruction of solicitors, possibly longer if a commercial lender is involved. The timescales are not of our making but largely reflect the processes of other parties.

It is essential that the SIPP is set up before the transfer commences and to ensure that everything is in place for the transaction to be successfully completed. You can assist us by providing the information we require and ensuring that funding is available; we cannot be responsible for the consequences of such delay.

If there is a particular issue on timing, please raise this with us at the earliest opportunity.

### **What next?**

TENTATIVE ENQUIRY	NOT YET A CUSTOMER, COMMITTED ENQUIRY	EXISTING SIPP MEMBER
If your enquiry is tentative and you do not have a SIPP established with us yet, please complete the Property & Land Questionnaire and send any additional information you may have, such as a recently produced surveyor's report. We can give you an in principle view, prior to full due diligence being requested, to spot any obvious issues. If you then wish to proceed, you can submit your SIPP application with the Property & Land Questionnaire.	If you want to set up a SIPP to transfer this property or purchase another one, then you should complete the Property & Land Questionnaire along with a SIPP application form and copies of existing headleases and occupational leases (where applicable). Note that we will also require evidence of identity, as per the application form, your adviser or local post office will be able to certify documents.	If you already have your SIPP established, we will require the Property & Land Questionnaire and copies of existing headleases and occupational leases (where applicable). If you have a SIPP Lite plan, then this will need to be upgraded to a Minerva SIPP.

### **For further information**

You should speak to your financial adviser, and if you have any specific questions about the process or the suitability of a particular property you can contact our Property Team on 01228 538 988 or email [property@investacc.co.uk](mailto:property@investacc.co.uk)

Note that InvestAcc Pension Administration Limited is the SIPP scheme operator and does not provide advice.

# Guide to In-Specie Property Transfers - FAQs

**Q1. Can my SIPP receive a transfer of leasehold property?**

Yes, so long as there is at least 50 years remaining on the lease. A lender is likely to require an even longer lease in order to grant a mortgage.

**Q2. Can my SIPP own a share of property?**

Yes. This may be with other SIPP members, yourself personally, anyone connected to you or third parties. For more details please see the section headed 'Joint Ventures' earlier in this guide.

**Q3. Can my SIPP own residential property?**

No.

**Q4. Can my SIPP own mixed use property (e.g. a shop with a flat above)?**

As the pension scheme cannot hold residential property, it will be necessary to split the title, with the freeholder selling a long leasehold interest in the commercial element to the pension scheme. In this scenario, we are only able to acquire the long leasehold, not the freehold, because the pension scheme would otherwise risk acquiring an interest in residential property in the future, possibly because of another party's actions such as the forfeit of the lease, which can trigger severe tax penalties for your pension scheme.

**Q5. Can a property be developed after the transfer has been completed?**

Yes, with our prior permission (see SIPP Guide to Development Works for more information).

**Q6. Can my SIPP own things other than the land and fabric of the building?**

No.

**Q7. Can a tenant sub-let the property?**

We may agree to this, depending on the scenario.

**Q8. Can my SIPP own ground rents?**

No.

**Q9. Can my SIPP receive a transfer of overseas commercial property or land?**

No.

**Q10. Does my SIPP have to insure land?**

Yes, we expect a public liability policy to be put in place for any land transfers, whether Agricultural, Development etc.

**Q11. Can I convert residential property to commercial property, so that my pension scheme can acquire it?**

Three stages are required before we can consider acquiring it: 1. Permission must have been granted by the local authority for the change of use. 2. The property must then have been used commercially for that use. 3. There must be no residential element remaining.







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